



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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July 1, 2011

FB11-055

NOAA Seeking Public Comment on Proposed Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Generic Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures Amendment for the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Generic Annual Catch Limits /Accountability Measures Amendment for the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish, Red Drum, Shrimp, and Coral and Coral Reef fishery management plans (FMPs). A DEIS is a draft analysis of potential significant impacts that proposed management actions can have on the natural and social environment. The analysis compares a series of alternatives for each action to evaluate the effects on the environment. The Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of the DEIS in the *Federal Register* on July 1, 2011 (76 FR 127). The public comment period ends on **August 15, 2011**.

The Generic Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures Amendment proposes the establishment of annual catch limits and accountability measures for species in the Reef Fish, Red Drum, Shrimp, and Coral and Coral Reef FMPs not subject to overfishing (rate of removal is too high). Annual Catch Limits are set at levels that prevent overfishing from occurring by limiting the amount of fish that can be caught in pounds. Accountability Measures are management controls to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded, and to correct overages of annual catch limits if they occur.

Actions contained in the DEIS include:

- Actions 1 and 2 determine which stocks are in need of annual catch limits and which may not need annual catch limits due to being removed from the fishery management plans or delegated to other management agencies.

- Action 3 establishes species groupings, which allow a single annual catch limit to be set for all species within that group.

- Actions 4, 5, and 6 establish the necessary procedures for determining and implementing annual catch limits and associated management measures by creating an acceptable biological catch control rule, and annual catch limit/annual catch target control rule, and a framework procedure for implementing management changes.

- Action 7 establishes annual catch limits, and optional annual catch targets for each species or species group. This section also apportions stocks that occur across jurisdictional boundaries between the Gulf of Mexico Council and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and allocates black grouper between commercial and recreational sectors.

- Action 8 establishes the accountability measures for each species or species group. In-season and post-season accountability measures will be established to keep catch levels within the designated annual catch limits or to restore catch levels to those limits if exceeded.

Request for Comments

Comments on this DEIS must be received no later than August 15, 2011, in order to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the Addresses section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Electronic copies of the DEIS, may be obtained from the Southeast Regional Office Web site at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/GulfACL.htm> and from the e-rule making portal <http://www.regulations.gov>.

You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. After selecting “submit a comment,” enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: NOAA-NMFS-2011-0143. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the

commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

- Mail: Rich Malinowski, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin may not be considered.

If you would like to receive these fishery bulletins via e-mail as soon as they are published, e-mail us at: SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov.